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ABSTRACT

The importance of examining classroom processes was highlighted in a 1992 British report on primary education, which emphasized the role of classroom management. Before that, several studies determined that misbehavior was small-scale and not widespread. For example, the 1989 Elton Report was a national policy document that described the extent of disruption in British schools as minor but needing such attention as training teachers in classroom management skills. There were two large British observational studies of teachers' classroom management strategies; the Teacher Education Project (1976-1981) analyzed classroom transactions in secondary schools, and the Leverhulms Primary Project (1989-1992) studied primary schools. The primary study determined that most deviant behavior was mild, teachers reacted quickly, and most students responded positively. The secondary study found that teachers spent little time on disciplining students, and most misbehaviors were minor. The few studies of classroom management from the student vantage point indicated that personal relationships and teachers' personality traits were important to classroom management. A finding common to all the research is that negative student behavior is mainly an excessive amount of trivial, annoying "misdemeanors" rather than seriously deviant behavior. Intervention programs involving partnerships between students, teachers, and the home have been the most successful. (Contains 24 references.) (SM)

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CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT RESEARCH IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Background

In Britain, as in many other countries, there is considerable scrutiny of the professional skills of teachers. Factors such as the reduction in the number of jobs available for pupils when they leave school, the expansion of knowledge in all fields, and rapid changes in the education system itself, combine to put pressure on teachers. They are expected to manifest a high degree of professional competence, and therefore to be able to manage their classes in such a way that children derive the maximum benefit from their compulsory schooling.

Usually British teachers have been free to determine their own means of managing their classes, but the introduction in 1998 of a 'literacy hour' and 'numeracy hour' in schools in England and Wales has been accompanied by a strong campaign to compel teachers to teach in a similar manner, though the whole concept is supposed to be voluntary. The literacy hour pattern proposed by the Department for Education and Employment consists of fifteen minutes of whole class 'shared text', fifteen minutes of whole class 'focused word or sentence work', twenty minutes of 'group and independent work', and ten minutes of whole class revision. Pressure to conform has been considerable.

This crude attempt to determine teachers' macro-strategies is a return to the pattern of a century ago, when teacher training institutions were called 'normal schools', as there was but a single approved 'norm', to which all teachers should equate (Rich, 1933). That was why Dickens said of M'Choakumchild, in his novel *Hard Times*, that he and 140 other schoolmasters "had been lately turned at the same time in the same factory, on the same principles, like so many pianoforte legs".

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There are several significant recurring themes in the British research literature. Some work focuses on teachers and their organisational abilities. The implication is that people can be responsible for their own actions, can anticipate and avoid problems. Thus identifiable aspects of classroom management, such as advance preparation and planning, can be incorporated into pre- and post-experience training programmes, to enable competent classroom management to be attained.

Other issues also receive attention in the research literature, including teachers' management of their professional skills, such as questioning or explaining strategies; pupils' perceptions of effective management; the roles and responsibilities of, and relationships between classroom teachers and senior teachers in the school; the effects of intervention programmes, often based on behaviour modification, sanctuary units or behaviour contracts. A wide variety of issues is embraced, from showing what the teacher regards as a good piece of work to the class, to dealing with a fight between pupils. Quite a deal of research is related to responses to national policy documents and statements.

Policy documents and responses to them

The importance of looking at classroom processes was highlighted in a report into education in the primary school produced by Alexander, Rose and Woodhead (1992). Of particular interest was the role of classroom management, and the possession of skills in this area is widely recognised to be a necessary part of a teacher's overall pedagogical competence. It was not the first 'official' report to consider such matters. Surveys of both primary and secondary schools by Her Majesty's Inspectorate had been produced in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Their conclusions were not alarming. They analysed several hundred lessons and judged misbehaviour to be small-scale rather than widespread. Nine out of ten primary school teachers were said to be able to command complete silence whenever they wanted it, while 25 out of 384 secondary schools visited were judged to have serious discipline problems.

Nonetheless it has been the social control of children's classroom behaviour that has aroused public interest. Indeed, public and press concern over discipline in schools was such that a

national enquiry was launched in the late 1980s. The resulting Elton Report (1989) criticised teacher training, stating that of the 56 teacher training institutions in Britain who replied to their survey, "few seemed to include specific units covering classroom behaviour in their courses". They therefore concluded that, as local education authorities were also providing little in-service training in this area, overall training provision must be inadequate. Hanko (1989) reported in response to the Elton Report that "Training in the management of pupils' behaviour has now been designated as a national in-service priority area", and it was subsequently made a compulsory requirement of all initial teacher training courses.

The Elton Report was a significant national policy document describing the extent of disruption in British schools. It concluded that most misbehaviour was minor, but that action should be taken in a number of areas, especially training in class management skills. Cooper and Upton (1990) reflected on the recommendations of the Elton Report and considered how these could be put into practice. They believed that the Report was an important landmark, which made recommendations for whole school policies and encouraged the use of positive strategies, especially in relation to non-academic achievements, so that schools could be rewarding places for all pupils.

However, although Cooper and Upton believed that, on the surface, the Elton Report was encouraging and supportive to teachers, recognising that they faced a 'difficult problem', if it was studied in greater depth a different picture could be presented. They argued that it offered a "generally bland concoction of educational clichés", such as the suggestions of the creation of a positive atmosphere and the welcoming of parents as "equal partners in the educational process". They found less palatable the report's belief in punishment, the notion that parents should have civil liabilities for their children if they misbehave, the imposition of restrictions on children's watching of television, and the idea that both pupils and parents should know what their 'duties and responsibilities' are. They saw the Elton Report as a conflicting mixture of liberalism and authoritarianism, the latter of which they saw as a cause of disruptive behaviour:

> *"It is the present authors' contention that this tendency toward unacknowledged authoritarianism in schools is a factor contributing to much 'indiscipline' in schools, and the failure of the Elton Report to confront this problem undermines its value, particularly in regard to the practical day to day concerns of pupils and classroom teachers."*

In support of their condemnation of the report, Cooper and Upton cited research by other British researchers that suggested behaviour problems were often the result of social and institutional constraints in schools, which were seen to extend beyond individual pupil and teacher influence. By considering and taking into account the perceptions of the pupils, these studies found that pupils saw the disruptive behaviour of other pupils as 'rational and justifiable' because they were merely responding to behaviour by teachers which was seen to be provocative.

Cooper and Upton cited other British research showing that teachers see their behaviour as rational when they base it on the assumptions they have of the pupils, and that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when these assumptions are often seen to be correct. The authors suggest that if teachers want to alter pupils behaviour, they first need to alter their own:

> *"Current approaches attach enormous importance to the need for teachers to create school settings which are responsive to the needs of all pupils. It is commonly argued that pupils behave well and learn effectively in situations which offer them the experience of success, and recognise their individuality and their esteem needs. (Barnes, 1976; Wheldall and Glynn, 1989)."*

Lawrence (1991) also pointed out the limitations of the Elton Report:

> *"What Elton has done in the main is to identify, in meticulous detail, the innumerable areas of school practice which may contribute to a reduction in disruptive behaviour. What cannot be expected is that success in this will be inevitable or easy or even in some cases very likely."*

Lawrence believed that there was a need for 'innovative projects', especially with regards to delinquency, and those who advocated the positive benefits of training (Docking (1985)), believed that there were ways in which trainees' class management skills could be developed. The debate has often been about the nature of such skills: whether merely learning how to terminate misbehaviour is sufficient, the degree of personal autonomy for teachers, or whether external prescription is thought to be necessary.

Teachers do not always have the time to reflect on the many different strategies they use, the frequency with which they employ them, or their effectiveness for the individual concerned or the class as a whole. Teaching is a very busy occupation, with hundreds of interactions in a single day, so it is difficult for practitioners to step back from these numerous transactions long enough to be able to gauge the consequences of their actions. Focus on training has occurred in response to policy documents, like the Elton Report, especially when it is based on research evidence. Wragg (1981, 1993b) produced training handbooks for student or experienced teachers based on empirical research findings from British projects.

Classroom observation

Understanding the dynamics of classroom interaction of any kind requires good information on what took place. Direct observation of classroom phenomena allows the researcher to see at first hand what is happening. Two of the largest British observation studies of primary and secondary teachers' classroom management strategies were undertaken by the present authors (E. C. Wragg 1984, 1993a; C. M. Wragg, 1994). The Teacher Education Project (1976-81) analysed the classroom transactions in several hundred lessons in secondary schools in the midland region of England, while the Leverhulme Primary Project (1989-92) studied several hundred lessons in primary schools in the midland, south-east and south-west regions.

The main focus in both studies was on what pupils and teachers thought to be disruptive behaviour, how teachers managed classroom disruption, and how they and their pupils perceived actual classroom events. There was direct observation of the participants' behaviour, as well as interviews with them in which they could explain and interpret it. Photographs of classroom situation were also used in interviews with teachers and pupils. There was a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Primary schools

The primary school sample consisted of 60 teachers and student teachers and 430 pupils drawn from 10 local education authorities in three geographical regions of England. There

were urban, rural and ethnically mixed schools, and the ages of the participating classes ranged from 4-12, covering the whole primary range. Two quantitative schedules and a mixture of qualitative observations were recorded during each of the 239 classroom observations and 1,195 lesson segments were analysed. There was a structured observation schedule containing predetermined categories which focused on pupil misbehaviour, its frequency and the responses, if any, made by teachers. 'On task' involvement levels and instances of 'deviancy' were recorded for every child in each class. 'Critical events', based on a modification of the work of Flanagan (1949), were also noted and teachers were asked to comment on them after the lesson. The 430 pupils were all interviewed individually to elicit their perceptions of classroom misdemeanours. Teachers and pupils were shown the same three photographs of disruptive behaviour during interviews and asked for their views on what teachers should do.

Types of misbehaviour	**% of occurrences**
1. Noisy or illicit talk	32.9
2. Inappropriate movement	26.4
3. Inappropriate use of materials	10.3
4. Defiance of teacher	8.3
5. Taking something without permission	1.8
6. Physical aggression to another pupil	1.4

Table 1 Percentage of lesson segments (n = 1,195) in which various kinds of misbehaviour occurred (C. M. Wragg, 1994).

Table 1 shows that most deviant behaviour was arguably mild, rather than severe. In a quarter to a third of cases there was either noisy chatter or inappropriate movement, usually the pupil moving without permission. Instances of more serious behaviour, like physical aggression towards another pupil, were much more rare, only occurring about one per cent of the time.

Teachers usually responded before the escalation of misbehaviour (94% of occasions), most commonly with an order to cease (72%) and the naming of the pupil (68%). A reprimand was also given in 45% of cases and on 26% of times the teacher tried to re-involve the pupil in the task, often going over to where the child was seated (22%). In nearly 99% of cases, the pupils to whom the teacher directed a response were judged by the observer to be the persons actually involved in the misbehaviour. The teachers used gesture and visibly changed their facial expression on 13% and 15% of occasions respectively. There were instances of strategies that appeared to terminate misbehaviour on one occasion, but not on another, and

the outcome of coping strategies was often determined by the context in which they occurred. In 90% of instances the pupils concerned fell silent, altercation only occurring in 4% of cases, more frequently in London schools than in other areas observed. In general when children misbehaved they tended also to be off task.

There were some interesting differences between teachers' and pupils' responses to photographs of disruptive incidents. Shouting, 'telling off' and involving superordinates like the head, or their parents, were the most frequent pupil expectations. By contrast no teacher said that she would 'shout', 'telling off' was in a lower ordinal position, and involvement of a superordinate was rarely mentioned. These findings partly corroborate the research of Wheldall and Merrett (1988), Harrop and Williams (1992) and other British researchers, who also showed that there may be some lack of congruence between the way that teachers and pupils perceive classroom discipline, though some of these studies focused specifically on rewards and punishments.

Wragg (1994) constructed a set of eight micro-paradigms from the classroom observations, based on the most frequently observed patterns of events. These were as follows:

1. *The boredom loop*

Task does not engage --- social chat --- teacher 'desist' --- pupil quiet --- process begins again

2. *Attention seeking*

Child 'stuck' --- leaves seat to ask teacher --- reprimanded for illicit movement --- returns --- talks to neighbour --- teacher comes over

3. *Prevention*

Pupil distracted --- teacher notices --- proximity (goes towards) --- re-involvement in work

4. *Power-coercion*

Teacher expects --- pupil declines --- teacher re-asserts --- pupil defiant --- coercion, as teacher insists on compliance

5. *Stereotyping*

Pupils disrupt --- teacher raises voice --- pupil named --- public shaming, often with typification (pupil accused of a type of behaviour)

6. Democratic

Pupils disrupt --- teacher reprimands --- teacher and pupils discuss issue and remedies

7. Confrontation

More serious misbehaviour --- teacher raises voice, showing anger --- pupil altercates --- teacher administers punishment

8. Displacement

Pupil disrupts --- teacher reprimands --- teacher sees pupil privately later, often after lesson

Secondary schools

Secondary school research studies have described a similar incidence of minor misdemeanours, rather than major insurrections to the picture of primary schools given above. Hilsum and Strong (1978) studied 201 teachers and found that teachers spent relatively little of their time on disciplining pupils, the range being from twenty minutes to nothing per day. Less experienced teachers (under five years of experience) spent twice as much time as longer-serving practitioners. Woods (1979) described what he called the 'mortification techniques' to which teachers resorted when fraternisation and negotiation had failed.

The Teacher Education Project included two studies by Wragg and Dooley (1984) and Wragg and Wood (1984) of classroom management strategies used by secondary teachers. Over 500 lessons given by trainee and experienced teachers were observed. The pattern of misbehaviour observed in 1,020 lesson segments from the classrooms of student teachers was not unlike that of trainee and experienced primary teachers reported in Table 1 above, though a different observation schedule was being used. Table 2 shows the six most common forms of misbehaviour noted during observations.

In most cases (61%) an order to cease was given. Reprimands (25%) and statements of rule (24%) were the next most common responses, while proximity, moving over to the pupil concerned, occurred on 20% of occasions. Teachers' actual classroom rules were studied and the five most common were:

(1) No talking when the teacher is talking, in public situations;

(2) No disruptive noises;

(3) Rules for entering, leaving and moving in classrooms;

(4) No interference in the work of others;

(5) Work must be completed in a specified way.

Types of misbehaviour	% of occurrences
1. Noisy talk	38
2. Non-verbal behaviour inappropriate to the task	24
3. Talk irrelevant to the task	23
4. Inappropriate use of materials/equipment	20
5. Illicit eating/drinking	12
6. Movement at the wrong time	11

Table 2 Percentage of lesson segments (n = 1,020) in which various kinds of misbehaviour occurred (Wragg and Dooley, 1994).

Pupil perspectives

There are relatively few studies of classroom management from a pupil vantage point. Where such research exists it has usually been of pupil opinions. A number of investigators, like Meighan (1977), Cohen and Manion (1981) and Wragg and Wood (1984), have come to similar conclusions, namely that children prefer teachers who possess professional skills, such as the ability to explain concepts clearly, who are interested in them as individuals, who are fair in their use of rewards and punishments, who are slightly strict, but not overly authoritarian, and who have a sense of humour that is not sarcastic.

Personal relationships and personality traits of teachers have been shown to be important in pupil studies. Wragg (1994) in her study of 430 primary pupils' perceptions of teachers' class management strategies, asked them what traits they regarded favourably. A 'good' teacher was seen as 'nice', 'kind', 'lovely' or 'friendly'. A 'bad' teacher was 'horrible', 'nasty', 'rotten' or 'grumpy'. Some research studies have been of adolescent populations, especially of groups of boys, and 'having a laugh' with an adult is probably a more prevalent feature amongst young adolescent males than amongst primary pupils.

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Miller (1996) has summarised a number of British studies of pupil behaviour in his account of his own research into the views and practices of 68 educational psychologists and 24 teachers when dealing with especially difficult pupils. Most educational psychologists had observed the pupils in class before commencing their action programmes, many of which involved some sort of systematic attempt to influence individual pupils' behaviour. In nearly three quarters of the programmes studied there was at least one particular target behaviour that was chosen as something to be decreased (for example, 44% of the programmes targeted pupils leaving their seat without permission).

What was notable about Miller's work was that many of the reinforcers were delivered out of school, often by parents. Within school reinforcers were categorised as symbolic (ticks, stars), material (sweets, pencils), activity (painting, running errands), social from teacher, peers or others (praise). High success rates were recorded, especially where a participative culture had been established among teachers and where effective negotiation had taken place.

Footnote

It is not possible in this brief paper to give more than a flavour of British research into classroom management, but the common finding has been that negative pupil behaviour is mainly an excessive amount of trivial and irksome misdemeanours, rather than seriously deviant behaviour. Intervention programmes that involve partnership between pupils, teachers and with the home appear to have been most successful, especially where the behaviour to be modified has been identified and where some degree of pupil negotiation was involved. While national government pressures tend to be towards ensuring teacher compliance, practitioners seem to be happier when they are able to make a professional judgement and choice.

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